



EDUARDAS MIEŽELAITIS

KASTANTAS
AND THE BIRDS





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AND THE BIRDS



VGA
VILNIUS

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In the spring when all is green
Young Kastantas won't be seen
Staying in—he goes to play
In the woods and fields all day.
On the grass he loves to lie
Watching butterflies go by.

Tra-la-la!
The skylark fills
Hill and hollow
With her trills,

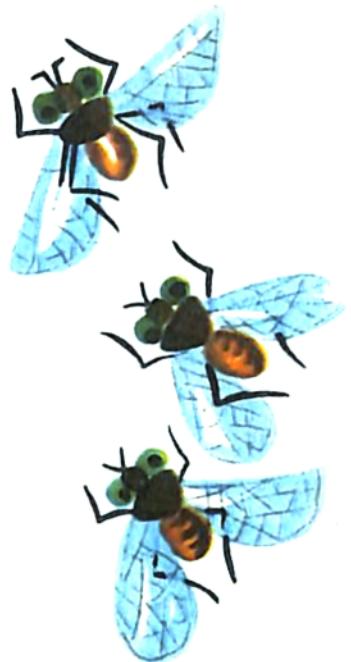
While the swallow calls
Tweet-tweet!
Keen as always
To compete.

Chuck-chuck!
A Red Indian cries...
It's the starling
Hunting flies.

Ga-ga-ga!
A cowboy stork
Sets out proudly
For a walk.

Cheep! The finch,
A cheeky fellow,
Boasts his wings
Are streaked with yellow.

Pew! A note
So loud and clear
Shows the nightingale
Is near.





Croak! The frog
With popping eyes
Can't get over
His surprise.

Out of doors Kastantas spends
Happy hours
With his friends.
With the starling
See him striding,
With the stork
See him go riding!
When the birds are in full song
He can listen all day long

For these birds
Of many a feather
Splendid music make together.

"Tell me, finch
With yellow wing,
How you learned
So well to sing?"

The finch stops
Chirruping to say:
"I studied hard
For many a day."





"Starling with your violin,
Tell me,
How did you begin?"

The starling
Drops his bow to say:
"I studied hard
For many a day."

"Conductor stork
So strict and stern,
This skill of yours
Where did you learn?"

The stork
Stops beating time to say:
"I studied hard
For many a day."

The frog begins to croak:
"Oh dear,
He wants to be a bird,
I hear!"

The cuckoo
Thinks it foolish too:
"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"







All the birds
Who sing for joy
Feel truly sorry
For the boy.

Kastantas
Yielding to dismay
Has now no wish
To run or play.



He has no wings!
It's clear that he
Can never join
Their company.

The sky is blue,
The sunlight strong.
The birds resume
Their joyful song.

But seated on a stump nearby
Kastantas mopes
And starts to cry.

The frog comes hopping up,
Complaining:
"Oh dear,
It surely can't be raining?!"

Pit-a-patter,
Tear on tear.
Who shall offer
Comfort here?

How can
Anybody
Cry
When the sun
Is in the sky?

"Hey, what's the matter?
Why so sad?"
The frog politely asks the lad.

"I want to sing and play
Like these
Bird-musicians in the trees!"



"Is that what bothers you?
Come, wipe
Your tears away—
And play this pipe!"

"A pipe, you say?"
"Just for a start."
"A wooden pipe?"
"One made of bark."

"I'd like to play a tune
Right now!"
"That's not the way!
I'll show you how."

"You'll nowhere find
A better teacher,"
The frog declares,
A boastful creature.

"All the songbirds
Envy me
When I sing my do-re-me..."

Kastantas has a great ambition
To be a really good musician.
He takes his teacher
At his word—
He'll pipe as well as any bird.





The grasshopper
Will have a rival
For young Kastantas is not idle.

He takes the pipe up
With a smile
And plays a tune
In country style.

"Come, hares and hedgehogs,
Time to dance!"

Now round and round
They leap and prance
To many an admiring glance.

The vixen
Busy in her kitchen

With the cock she has to cook
Rushes out to have a look.

A clog dance
With a hare she dances
To music played
By young Kastantas.

Attracted by the melody
The songbirds gather in a tree



And as the dancers
Come and go
They sing sweet descants
High and low.

Kastantas—all the birds agree—
Is fit to join their company.

They like the way
 he pipes and sings

And so
 they give Kastantas wings.
A new pipe too
 they give
 the boy

Who laughs aloud
 and leaps for joy.

He's playing now
Without a pause.
How proud he is!
The music soars...

The frog looks round
With eyes aglow
As if to say: "I told you so!"







W

ho comes here
With pipe and reed,
Bow and arrow,
Who indeed?

Are they starlings
At our window,
Long-limbed cowboys
Or Red Indians?

More and more
Of them appear.





Why are they
Assembling here?

Have they come
To bait the cock?
They have not!
They have not!

Or to chase
The pussy-cat?
No, not that!
No, not that!

They're not chasing,
They're not baiting!
Happy days
They're celebrating,

Singing
To their heart's desire
And Kastantas
Leads the choir.

Let these young
Red Indians sing
Loud as starlings
In the spring!

Let these long-limbed
Cowboys prance
Like young storks
In lively dance!

Look — the cock
Is singing too!
Cock-a-doodle-
Doodle-doo!





W

here's he going
With that board,
Such a thick one and so broad?

Why, he's visiting a neighbour,
Papartynas the cabinetmaker.

Splendid tools of every kind
On the old man's bench
You'll find.

Planes and chisels,
Files and glue,
Pots of paint
And varnish too.

The board appears
Too thick to you?
Kastantas here
Knows what to do.

Chop it once and yet again—
Watch it split along the grain!





Any roughness he removes
With a plane
That makes all smooth.
Then a saw he takes — raw-raw —
Sprinkling sawdust on the floor.

When
Each part
Fits
Well and true,
Out he reaches
For the glue,

Smears the pieces,
Sets them straight,
Clamps them in a vice —
And waits.

From it in a day or two
Comes a violin — brand-new!

Next
Brown varnish
He applies,
Polishing it
When it dries.

What is missing?
Four good strings





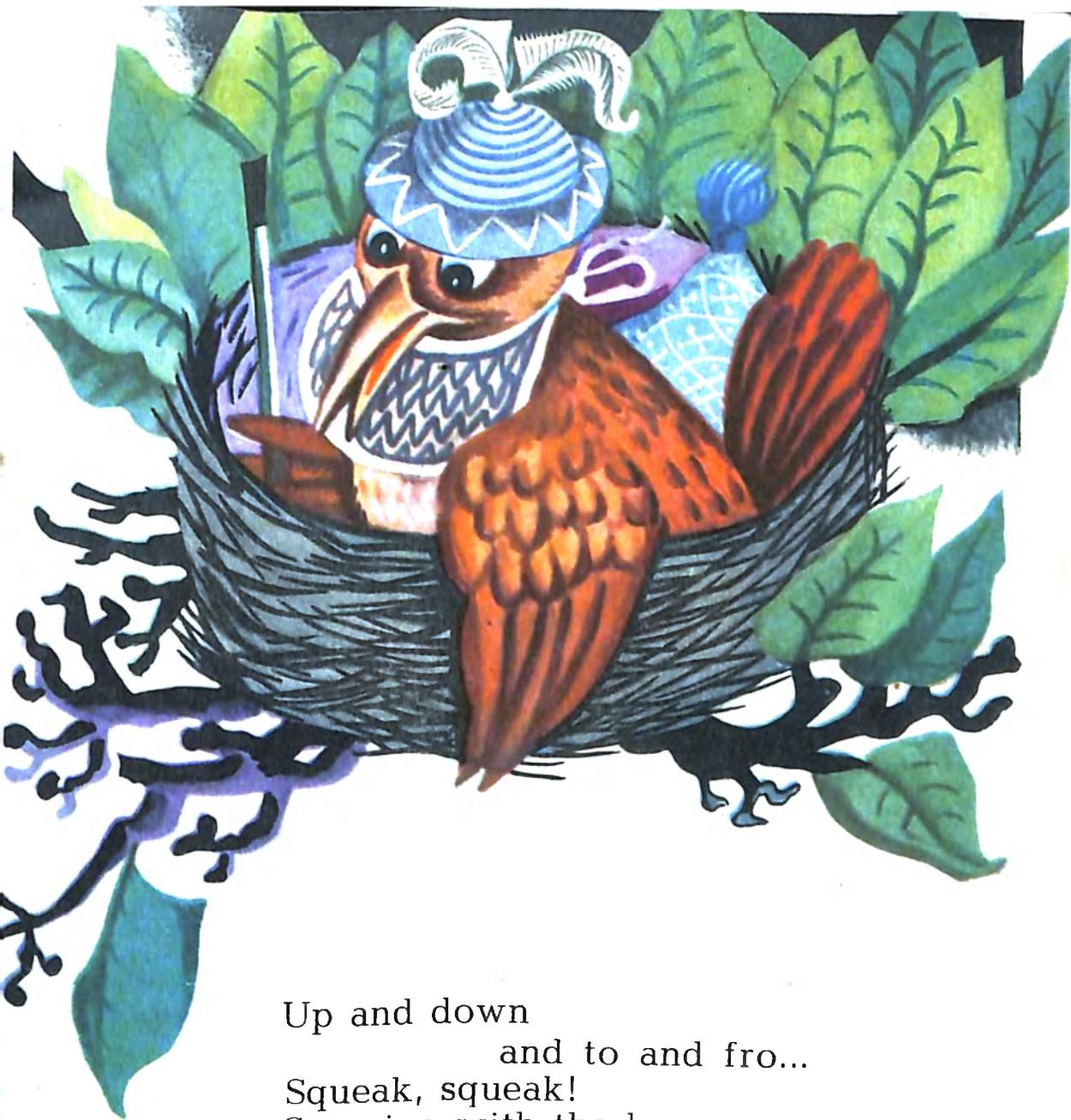


And a bow
That lightly springs.

He finds and shapes
A lightweight stick
That's not too thin
And not too thick.

He fits
The strings.
The bow is made.
His violin
Can now be played.





Up and down
and to and fro...
Squeak, squeak!
Scraping with the bow...
Squeak, squeak!
Scraping all day long...
It sounds awful!
Something's wrong!

That's enough! Who ever heard
Such a squawking from a bird?

"Tell me, song-thrush,
Where did you
Learn to sing and play
In tune?"

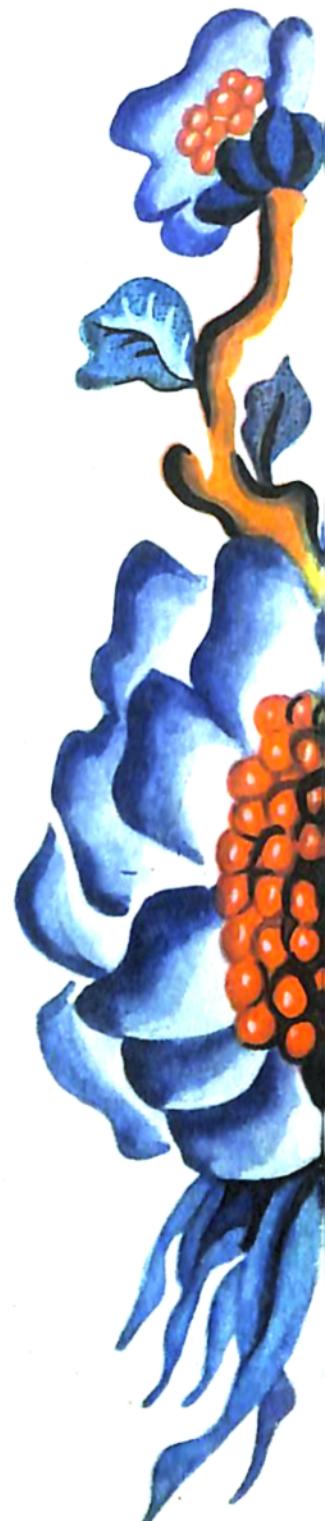
The thrush
Breaks off his song to say:
"I studied hard
For many a day"—

But does not tell Kastantas
Where.
To ask again
He does not dare.

Now through the forest
See him tread
With heavy heart
And drooping head.

His cheeks are pale,
His face downcast,
His tears come flowing
Thick and fast.

The frog comes hopping by,
Exclaiming:
"Indeed,
I do believe it's raining!"





The little frogs cry:
"Rain? Hooray!
Let's have
A shower
Rightaway!"

But then they see
The little lad
And ask him kindly:
"Why so sad?"

"The thrush,"
He sobs,
"Forgot
To tell
Me where
He learned
To play
So well
And I
Can't learn
All by
Myself."

"Cheer up!"
The little frogs reply.
"Come, dry your eyes
And do not cry!
We'll tell you
What he didn't say:





The daddy thrush
Taught him to play.

So ask your daddy where to go!
He'll help you.
He is sure to know.

The finest house you ever saw
That has a sign above the door:

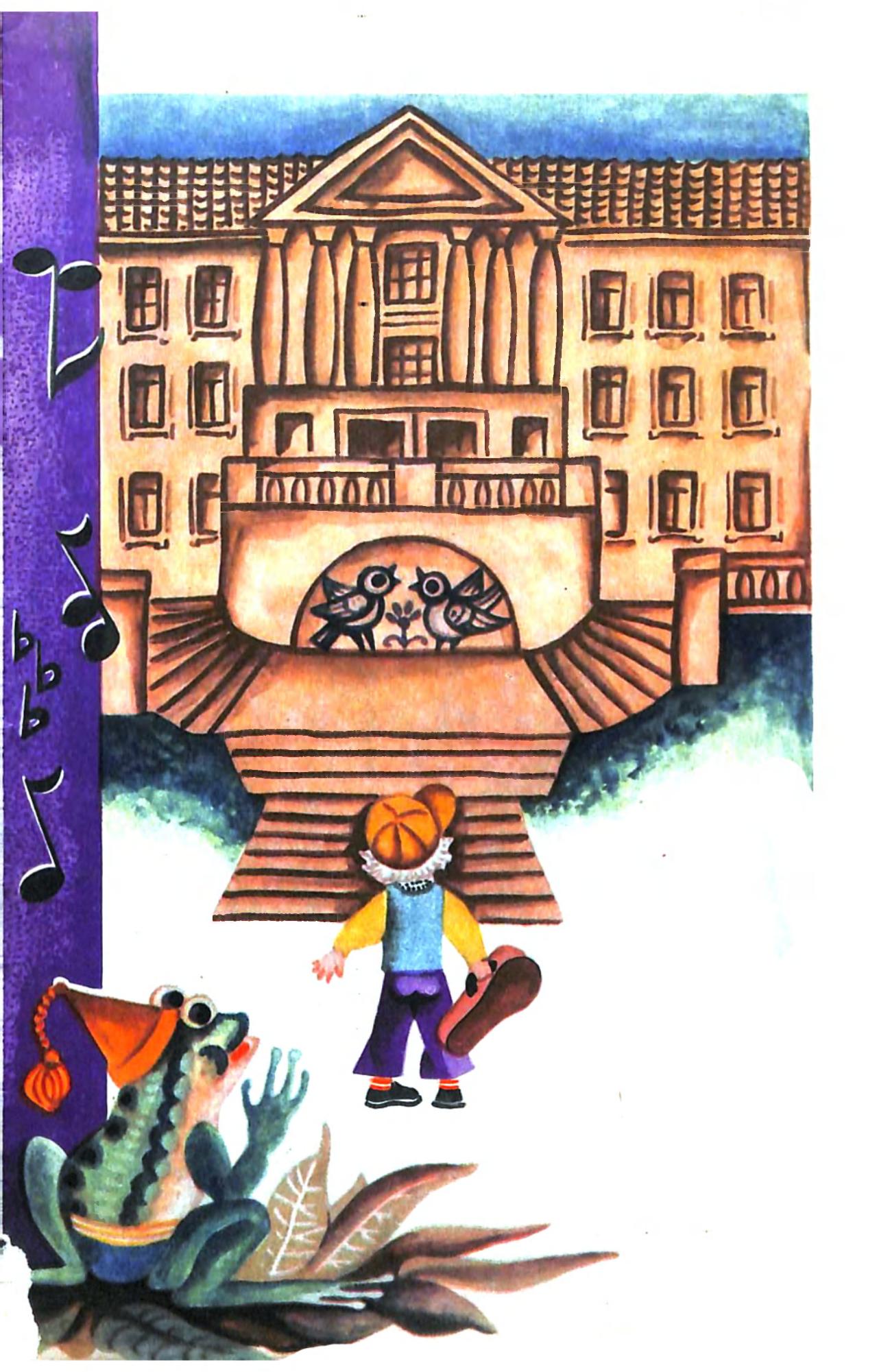
MUSIC SCHOOL

"Of course, he knows!"
Kastantas says
And home he goes.

"Please, Daddy, take me
To the school
Where music-making
Is the rule!"

All his troubles quickly pass
When Kastantas joins a class

At the school
Where grown-up teachers
Wear long beards
That hide their features.



Here the pupils very soon
Learn to play and sing
In tune,
Keeping
Perfect harmony:
Do,
Re,
Mi,
Fa,
Sol,
La,
Ti...





B

irds in autumn fall asleep
But you still
Can hear them cheep

In Kastantas' violin
Which it seems
They're nesting in.

In its music every bird
Of the countryside is heard.

To a string his finger bends
And a lark to heaven ascends.



Tweet! A movement of his bow
Brings a swallow sweeping low.

Pew-pew-pew! The hill and dale
Echo with a nightingale.

Chik-chirik! With songs of joy
Little tomtits greet the boy.

In his violin they hide,
Minstrels of the countryside.

He has just to touch a string
For the birds at once to sing.

Young Kastantas, I avow,
Is a bird-musician now.



Edited by LIONGINAS PAŽŪSIS

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Illustrations © Vaga Publishers 1976
Printed in USSR

